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NEWS release

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Yukon Launches Collaborative Palliative Care Program

WHITEHORSE – Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers today announced the opening of the Yukon Palliative Care Program.

"We are pleased to be launching this integrated, multi-disciplinary program. It is important to enable someone to die with dignity, free of pain, surrounded by their loved ones in a setting of their choice," Cathers said. "The recent expansion of our Telehealth Network will make the Palliative Care Program available through video conferencing in all Yukon communities, he added."

The Yukon Palliative Care Program provides consulting services, public and professional education, and training and support to volunteers in communities. It is delivered through the Continuing Care Branch of Health and Social Services. This collaborative initiative is supported by an advisory committee made up of care providers from Whitehorse General Hospital, Hospice Yukon, First Nations health programs, pharmacists, local physicians and continuing care staff (home care and long term care).

This group worked in partnership to create the program, which includes a volunteer coordinator, a registered nurse and a social worker. The program is funded through the Territorial Health Access Fund (THAF) for \$1,084,000 over a four year period.

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"Palliative care is a type of care offered to a person who is dying," Sharon Specht, manager of the program, said. "It seeks to ease patients' suffering and improve their quality of living and dying," Specht said. "It also helps address the needs of the family, both in terms of practical issues, as well as coping throughout illness and bereavement."

The palliative care program in Yukon was created "without walls," meaning the program offers its services and support wherever patients and family are. "We wanted to create a program that enables us to go to the patient whichever community they live in," Specht said. "It is important for palliative patients to remain, wherever possible, in their home communities, surrounded by family and loved ones," she added.

For more information on the program, call 456-6807 or toll-free in the communities, 1-800-661-0408 extension 6807.

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